

Legislative Update

The 2003 Montana Legislature could have enacted numerous changes to CHIP, but in the end, only two minor but important changes emerged.

First, Legislators shifted CHIP's state funding from "general fund" money (the state's checkbook) to "state special revenue." This means that CHIP's funding is more secure and cannot be moved to other programs. The state special revenue comes from Montana's Tobacco Settlement and was requested by voters last November when they passed Initiative 146.

Second, CHIP now has the authority to spend private money, if it's received. CHIP's annual budget has been limited by money the state contributes, matched by money from the federal government (for every dollar CHIP spends, Montana puts in 19 cents and the federal government puts in 81 cents). The Legislature has given CHIP the authority to spend money received from donations, grants, and gifts. This money will be matched by federal dollars to provide health insurance for more Montana children.

Many families contacted their Legislators and asked them not to exclude 18 year olds from CHIP coverage, as one Legislator recommended. Legislators listened to you and did not make this change. Eighteen year olds will still be covered by CHIP until the end of the month of their 19th birthday.